

# Hearts Beat Clubs in Game Played by Fate!

**Tropical Moon of Panama United Hearts of Raymond Regan and Mary O'Rourke—War Parted Them, Though Both Served—Raymond Went A. W. O. L. to Find Mary, Escaped From Prison Just to See Her, Now Wedding Bells Will Ring in New York**

By Fay Stevenson.

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**F**ATE, Cupid and the God of War all played their role in the romance of two New York young people who have just announced their engagement. The girl is Miss Mary Catherine O'Rourke, a pretty school teacher in Public School No. 27 of this city and the man is Raymond Regan, President of the Regan Printing Company at No. 145 William Street.

Fate drew these two together, Cupid kept their love warm and the Great War did the rest.

It was while Raymond Regan lay ill of a tropical fever in a Panama hospital that he first saw the dainty slip of a girl who was later to become his bride. That was long before the war and young Regan was then an engineer doing construction work on the canal. It was his first job and he was putting in his best work when suddenly he was stricken with the dreaded fever of that climate. His best pal, a chap by the name of O'Rourke was also stricken at the same time. O'Rourke had a dearly loved sister and he begged her to come to his assistance. She came at once, nursed her brother and—well, of course, she also nursed young Regan, her brother's chum, back to health.

As Raymond lay recuperating on his bed in that Panama hospital his eyes constantly watched the little door through which his pal's sister, Mary Catherine O'Rourke, would pass. Her coming meant new life, new health. She made daily visits to these boys and when she came—why—

"It was just like a breath from heaven," says Regan to-day, as he talks it over. "We boys were away from home for the first time in our life, the fever took all the grit out of us, and then came Mary Catherine, a mere slip of a girl, with laughing eyes and a pleasant word on her lips. Mary Catherine meant the whole world to her brother, but she meant life and love to me. I fell in love then and there. Just how she felt I cannot say, but she was mighty kind to me anyway."

"Then came long strolls under a tropical moon among the fronding palms. We talked of this world and how strange it was certain people met. We talked of love and planned for the future. Mary Catherine is a Columbia College girl, she has been reared and brought up in New York and is a splendid linguist, and down there during those moonlight nights she seemed like an angel sent from heaven to cheer my spirits and awaken me back to life and work. "At last came our parting time. Mary Catherine had to go back to school and I was well enough to go to work. I planned to go back to New York as soon as I finished my work in Panama, and we parted for what we supposed a 'short time.'"

But here is where the World War came into their romance. Just as young Regan was planning to sail back to New York and to Mary Catherine O'Rourke the country went to war and he volunteered to go overseas as an engineer. He was accepted and after three weeks in an army camp near Washington was pressed into immediate service with the 43d Road and Bridge Battalion.

Raymond Regan and Mary Catherine O'Rourke were so interested and taken up with overseas affairs that they even forgot to correspond. Letters, especially romantic ones, were scarce. There was no time for love

or epistles of those happy days spent under Panama moonbeams. The young people of the nation were ready to defend their flag and Raymond and Mary Catherine were the first to its defense.

Meanwhile, however, Mary Catherine had heard that young Regan was on the other side. Through her brother she learned that this young man was giving his heart and soul to his work and she longed to give up her school work and get into things herself. During her college days at Columbia she had been a splendid linguist. She spoke Italian and French fluently. What could she do now to help her country?

The answer came to her through friends. She could be a telegraph operator. There were 4,000,000 men doing this work and only sixty girls. Perhaps she could join the Signal Corps of the United States Army. She took examinations and passed so high that within two months after Raymond Regan reached Paris Mary Catherine arrived at Tours and was placed in charge of the Information Bureau where she received and translated hundreds of S. O. S. messages every day.

There was dancing and much merrymaking in Tours. Mary Catherine was pretty and winsome and very popular. But while she partook of these festivities during recreation

periods her heart kept wondering about young Regan. Where was he now? What was he doing?

Regan, too, was constantly thinking of Mary Catherine. Her brother told him she was "somewhere in France," but he had no idea what she was doing or how they could meet. Yet it was some comfort to know that she was on his side of the water. They were near. When would they meet? Would the same fate which drew them together in Panama bring them together in Paris? Would they ever stroll through the streets of Paris as they had strolled along the tropical bays of Panama hand in hand on moonlight nights?

Then the Armistice was signed and every one went wild. War was over. Life was great. Every one was happy. The men must stay on the other side a while longer but the fighting was all over. And then on top of that good news came the word straight from Regan's pal that Mary Catherine O'Rourke was at Tours still taking S. O. S. messages.

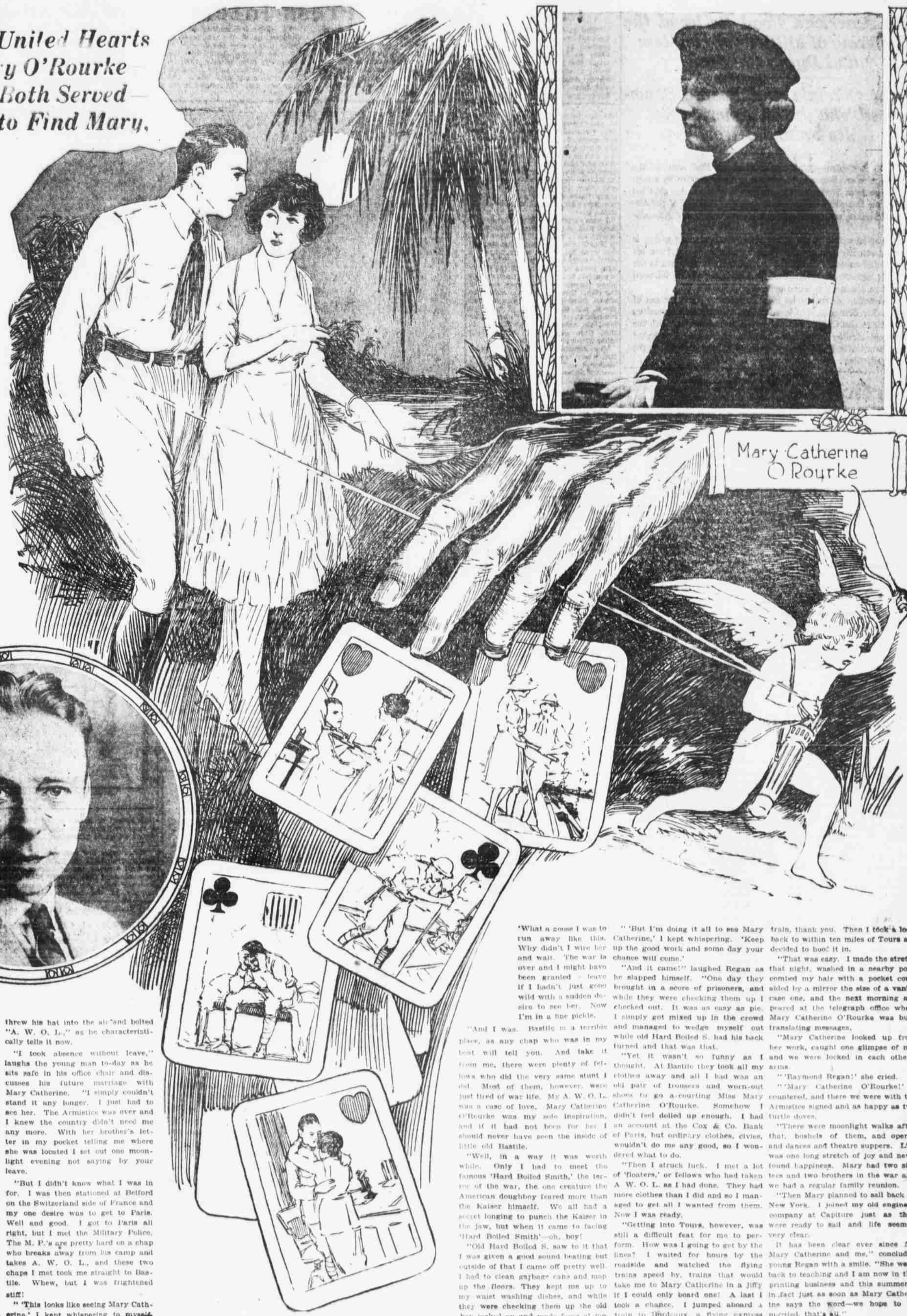
That was too much for Regan. He

threw his hat into the air and yelled "A. W. O. L.," as he characteristically tells it now.

"I took absence without leave," laughs the young man to-day as he sits safe in his office chair and discusses his future marriage with Mary Catherine. "I simply couldn't stand it any longer. I just had to see her. The Armistice was over and I knew the country didn't need me any more. With her brother's letter in my pocket telling me where she was located I set out one moonlight evening not saying by your leave."

"But I didn't know what I was in for. I was then stationed at Belfort on the Switzerland side of France and my one desire was to get to Paris. Well and good. I got to Paris all right, but I met the Military Police. The M. P.'s are pretty hard on a chap who breaks away from his camp and takes A. W. O. L., and these two chaps I met took me straight to Bastille. Whew, but I was frightened stiff!

"This looks like seeing Mary Catherine," I kept whispering to myself.



Raymond Regan.

Mary Catherine O'Rourke

"What a goose I was to run away like this. Why didn't I write her and wait. The war is over and I might have been granted a leave if I hadn't just gone wild with a sudden desire to see her. Now I'm in a fine pickle."

"And I was. Bastille is a terrible place, as any chap who was in my boat will tell you. And take it from me, there were plenty of fellows who did the very same stunt I did. Most of them, however, were just tired of war life. My A. W. O. L. was a case of love. Mary Catherine O'Rourke was my sole inspiration, and if it had not been for her I should never have seen the inside of little old Bastille."

"Well, in a way it was worth while. Only I had to meet the famous 'Hard Boiled Smith,' the terror of the war, the one creature the American doughboy feared more than the Kaiser himself. We all had a secret longing to punch the Kaiser in the jaw, but when it came to facing 'Hard Boiled Smith'—oh, boy!

"Old Hard Boiled S. saw to it that I was given a good sound beating but outside of that I came off pretty well. I had to clean garbage cans and mop up the floors. They kept me up to my waist washing dishes, and while they were checking them up the old boy looked on and made faces at me."

"But I'm doing it all to see Mary Catherine," I kept whispering. "Keep up the good work and some day your chance will come."

"And it came!" laughed Regan as he slapped himself. "One day they brought in a score of prisoners, and while they were checking them up I checked out. It was as easy as pie. I simply got mixed up in the crowd and managed to wedge myself out while old Hard Boiled S. had his back turned and that was that."

"Yet it wasn't so funny as I thought. At Bastille they took all my clothes away and all I had was an old pair of trousers and worn-out shoes to go a-courting Miss Mary Catherine O'Rourke. Somehow I didn't feel dolled up enough. I had an account at the Cox & Co. Bank of Paris, but ordinary clothes, civies, wouldn't do me any good, so I wondered what to do."

"Then I struck luck. I met a lot of 'floaters,' or fellows who had taken A. W. O. L. as I had done. They had more clothes than I did and so I managed to get all I wanted from them. Now I was ready."

"Getting into Tours, however, was still a difficult feat for me to perform. How was I going to get by the lines? I waited for hours by the roadside and watched the flying trains speed by, trains that would take me to Mary Catherine in a jiffy if I could only board one! A last in a chance, I jumped aboard a train to Bordeaux, a flying express train, thank you. Then I took a local back to within ten miles of Tours and decided to hoof it in."

"That was easy. I made the stretch that night, washed in a nearby pool, combed my hair with a pocket comb aided by a mirror the size of a vanity case one, and the next morning appeared at the telegraph office where Mary Catherine O'Rourke was busy translating messages."

"Mary Catherine looked up from her work, caught one glimpse of me, and we were locked in each other's arms."

"Raymond Regan!" she cried. "Mary Catherine O'Rourke!" I countered, and there we were with the Armistice signed and as happy as two little doves."

"There were moonlight walks after that, bushels of them, and operas and dances and theatre suppers. Life was one long stretch of joy and new-found happiness. Mary had two sisters and two brothers in the war and we had a regular family reunion."

"Then Mary planned to sail back to New York. I joined my old engineer company at Captivity just as they were ready to sail and life seemed very clear."

"It has been clear ever since for Mary Catherine and me," concluded young Regan with a smile. "She went back to teaching and I am now in the printing business and this summer—just as soon as Mary Catherine says the word—we hope to be married, that's all."